

## **Fact Sheet - Smokeless Tobacco**

The two main types of smokeless tobacco in the United States are chewing tobacco and snuff.<sup>1,2</sup> Chewing tobacco comes in the form of loose leaf, plug, or twist.<sup>1,2</sup> Snuff is finely ground tobacco that can be dry, moist, or in sachets (tea bag-like pouches).<sup>2</sup> Although some forms of snuff can be used by sniffing or inhaling into the nose,<sup>2</sup> most smokeless tobacco users place the product in their cheek or between their gum and cheek.<sup>3</sup> Users then suck on the tobacco and spit out the tobacco juices, which is why smokeless tobacco is often referred to as spit or spitting tobacco.<sup>3</sup> Smokeless tobacco is a significant health risk and is not a safe substitute for smoking cigarettes.<sup>4</sup>

### **Health Effects**

Smokeless tobacco contains 28 cancer-causing agents (carcinogens).<sup>2</sup> It is a known cause of human cancer,<sup>5</sup> as it increases the risk of developing cancer of the oral cavity.<sup>5</sup> Oral health problems strongly associated with smokeless tobacco use are leukoplakia (a lesion of the soft tissue that consists of a white patch or plaque that cannot be scraped off) and recession of the gums.<sup>3</sup>

- Smokeless tobacco use can lead to nicotine addiction and dependence.<sup>4</sup>
- Adolescents who use smokeless tobacco are more likely to become cigarette smokers.<sup>3</sup>

### **High-Risk Populations and Current Estimates**

Smokeless tobacco use in the United States is higher among young white males; American Indians/Alaska Natives; people living in southern and north central states; and people who are employed in blue collar occupations, service/laborer jobs, or who are unemployed.<sup>6</sup>

- Nationally, an estimated three percent of adults are current smokeless tobacco users.<sup>7</sup>
- Smokeless tobacco use is much higher among men (six percent) than women (0.4 percent).<sup>7</sup>
- In the United States, nine percent of American Indian/Alaska Natives, 4 percent of whites, 2 percent of African Americans, 1 percent of Hispanics, and 0.6 percent of Asian-American adults are current smokeless tobacco users.<sup>7</sup>
- An estimated eight percent of high school students are current smokeless tobacco users.<sup>8</sup>
- Smokeless tobacco is more common among males (13.6 percent) than female high school students (2.2 percent).<sup>8</sup> Estimates by race/ethnicity are 10.2 percent for white, 5.1 percent for Hispanic, and 1.7 percent for African-American high school students.<sup>8</sup>
- An estimated three percent of middle school students are current smokeless tobacco users.<sup>9</sup> Smokeless tobacco is more common among male (four percent) than female (two percent) middle school students.<sup>9</sup> Estimates by race/ethnicity are three percent for white, one percent for Asian, two percent for African-American, and four percent for Hispanic middle school students.<sup>9</sup>

## Other Information

- During 2005, the five largest tobacco manufacturers spent a new record of \$250.79 million on smokeless tobacco advertising and promotion, versus the previous record of \$236.68 million in 2001.<sup>1</sup>
- The two leading smokeless tobacco brands for users aged 12 years or older are Skoal (28 percent) and Copenhagen (22 percent).<sup>10</sup>

## References

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## For Further Information

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